

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 04091 201957Z

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2447

S E C R E T AMMAN 4091

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, JO, US, XF

SUBJECT: BEGIN "PEACE PROPOSALS"

REF: STATE 168595

1. I SAW KING HUSSEIN EVENING JULY 20 SHORTLY AFTER HE ARRIVED BACK FROM GULF. I PROVIDED HIM IMMEDIATELY WITH INFORMATION IN REFTEL.

2. HIS INITIAL REACTION WAS TO TELL ME THAT HE FOUND THE MESSAGE VERY INTERESTING AND THEN TO GO ON AND SAY THAT HE HAD JUST HEARD THAT BEGIN'S NEWS CONFERENCE WOULD BE ON ISRAELI RADIO HERE IN ENGLISH IN AN HOUR'S TIME (9:00 PM) AND THAT HE WOULD BE LISTENING.

3. I TOLD HIM THAT I THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY USEFUL IF UNHELPFUL REACTIONS AROUND THE ARAB WORLD COULD BE STILLED FOR A WHILE. HE REPLIED THAT BEGIN HAS BEEN VERY CLEVER SO FAR. "WE KNOW WHAT HE REALLY BELIEVES, BUT NOW HE HAS GOTTEN WORLD ATTENTION AND SYMPATHY WITH A PEACE PLAN." I REPLIED THAT FROM YOUR MESSAGE IT SEEMED THAT THE PLAN WAS MAINLY PROCEDURAL AND THAT SUCH A PLAN WOULD PROBABLY NOT STAND SCRUTINY FOR LONG. ON THE OTHER HAND THE ARABS HAD DEVELOPED A NUMBER OF NEW POSITIONS AND SHOULD NOT
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ALLOW THEIR POSITIONS TO BE ERODED OR INJURE US EFFORTS TO BE HELPFUL WITH PREMATURE AND EMOTIONAL REACTIONS. I ADDED THAT WHILE IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO OVERDRAW THE POINT, TO EXTENT THAT BEGIN WAS COURTING A POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE, WHATEVER HIS BELIEFS MIGHT REALLY BE, THAT IMAGE WOULD HAVE TO BE LIVED UP TO TO A CERTAIN EXTENT OR HIS CREDIBILITY WOULD SUFFER. KING SAID HE ACCEPTED THE POINT, HE ALSO NOTED THAT COMING BACK FROM THE

GULF IN HIS AIRPLANE TONIGHT, HE AND HIS STAFF HAD TALKED ABOUT TRYING TO PRESENT AN ARAB PEACE PLAN WHICH WOULD CONTRAST (FAVORABLY HE HOPED) WITH WHAT BEGIN HAD PRESENTED. CONVERSATION THEN MOVED ON TO DISCUSSION OF GULF TRIP (SEPTTEL).

3. NOT WANTING TO LEAVE KING WITHOUT A CLEARER IDEA FOR YOU ON WHETHER HE WAS INCLINED TO SPEAK OUT, I ASKED HIM AGAIN ABOUT WHAT KIND OF REACTIONS HE THOUGHT WE WOULD GET IN THE ARAB WORLD. I NOTED THAT WE WERE APPROACHING THE OTHERS, INCLUDING ASAD, ALONG THE SAME LINES. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT ASAD MIGHT WELL SPEAK OUT ON THE BEGIN PROPOSALS. HE ALSO NOTED THAT SADAT WAS NOT EASY TO HOLD IN CHECK. IN THE END HE FELT HE WOULD WANT TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT BEGIN HAD TO SAY IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE AND ALSO HE TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD WAIT AND SEE WHAT THE OTHER ARAB LEADERS SAY AND DO.

4. COMMENT: I DOUBT THAT WE CAN GET A FIRMER COMMITMENT NOW FROM HUSSEIN. I BELIEVE HE FEELS THAT HE CANNOT LAG TOO FAR BEHIND HIS FELLOW ARABS WHATEVER THEIR DIFFERENCES OVER FINER POINTS OF POLICY MIGHT BE. IT WAS CLEAR THAT KING WAS RELUCTANT TO BE DRAWN INTO A COMMITMENT IN OUR TALK AND I PUSHED RATHER MORE THAN IS NORMALLY POSSIBLE WITH HIM IN GETTING HIM TO SAY HE WOULD SEE FIRST WHAT THE OTHERS DO.
PICKERING

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PEACE PLANS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977AMMAN04091
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840089-1825
Format: TEL
From: AMMAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770740/aaaabifv.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 803a0467-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 77 STATE 168595
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1811564
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BEGIN \"PEACE PROPOSALS\"
TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, JO, IS, US, (HUSAYN), (BEGIN, MENACHEM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/803a0467-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009